

THE HAPPY FAMILY



GEORGE HODGES



THE HAPPY FAMILY

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HAPPY FAMILY
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THE BUSINESS OF BEING A WIFE

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THE BUSINESS OF BEING A WIFE

IN all ancient discussion of the ethics of social behavior involved in the relation of wives to their husbands, the note is set by old Hammurabi, in the earliest of extant codes of law, when he defines a good wife as one who stays at home and attends diligently to the business of the household. She is a careful mistress, he says, does not gad about, nor neglect her house, nor belittle her husband. Failing these humble qualities, he advises that she be thrown into the river. That was a long time ago, about 2250 B. C.

It was a man's law, as most law is to this present day. Madame Hammurabi was not consulted in the making of it. It was unjust, as legislation is apt to be when one class legislates for another class. It implied a subjection which was natural enough in a day when strength of arm was the credential of both might and right. Nevertheless, it went fairly to the heart of the whole matter. It defined the characteristic duty of the woman as the peaceful and happy maintenance of the home. Such it was, and such it still remains.

The epitaph of queens of ancient Rome—Domum servavit lanum fecit—may be freely translated, “She stayed at home and darned

stockings." It is hardly adequate, but it is admirable as far as it goes. In a world in which homes and stockings are essential to ordinary happiness somebody must attend to these essentials, and men seem to be temperamentally incapacitated for these tasks.

II

WHEN Christian, in "The Pilgrim's Progress," visited the House of the Interpreter, he found a man sweeping a room. The man was going about it with the zeal and energy with which a woodsman plies an axe upon an oak, with the result that the place was so filled with dust that Christian could not tell which was the man and which was the broom. Then came in a wise woman, who took the broom out of the man's hand, sprinkled water over the dusty floor, and with twenty gentle, expert movements of the brush swept the room as clean as the top of a polished table.

Here John Bunyan and Hammurabi and the Kings of Rome are in agreement, and join hands with all good husbands in glad acknowledgement of the providential superiority of their wives. Everybody ought to do what he can do best. Laws which are as much older than those of Hammurabi as the Garden of Eden is older than Bedford Gaol, settled the matter everlasting. The initial business of a

good wife is to make a good home.

Going back, however, for a moment to the Garden of Eden, I find in Jeremy Taylor's sermon on "The Marriage Ring" a curious citation of an old text. Taylor says: "Male and female created He them, and called their name Adam." That is, the two were one, and Adam was the one.

Jeremy Taylor's text belongs to the old order, and bears out his thesis in which he says that the first duty of a wife is obedience, and the second duty is compliance. The two seem to be synonymous, but the preacher defines compliance as "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." That is, the wife is not only to obey, but she is to do it with a ready will and a glad mind and a cheerful countenance. The Canterbury pilgrims felt that Griselda was a bit too patient: a conclusion in which most readers will agree. Even Jeremy Taylor admits certain necessary modifications in the wife's obligation to obey. Still, the wife ought, within bounds, to obey: Chaucer and Taylor were of one mind as to that.

III

ICANNOT say that in my parochial experience I have ever known the word "obey" in the marriage service to be a root of bitterness. Objection is often made to it, and the difficulty is sometimes evaded by the reply that the woman is required to promise

to obey because it is plain that the man will obey anyhow. It is a belated conventionality: that is what is the matter with it. We have gradually emerged, and are still emerging, from a savage state, leaving that behind. It represents a conception of the marriage relation in which, I hope, we believe no longer. It belongs to a day when a woman was supposed to have no will, and when it was seriously doubted if she had any soul.

The husband is as much bound by the law of marital obedience as is the wife, but he is not to obey her, nor is she to obey him; both are to be obedient to those high laws of reason and courtesy and love which are the laws of God. Domination cannot live with courtesy. If a marriage is right there is no reason for any promise of obedience. Such a vow is as impertinent between wife and husband as between friend and friend. If the marriage is wrong no subjection can mend it.

IV

NOW I come to certain practical suggestions as to the wife's part in the maintenance of domestic peace.

Let me commend, in the first place, a cheerful recognition of the fact of difference. The truth is that we are all different, each from the other. We are made that way, according to a divine intention. Nothing is more evident, yet

we evade and deny it. We hold, with Emerson, —but in earnest, not in satire,— that “difference from me is the measure of absurdity.” We fall into that inveterate error which is happily described as the “fallacy of this or that.” It consists in contending that we must make a choice: if this is right, then that is wrong; whereas, many times, the truth is not in the applause of the one and the repudiation of the other, but in the inclusion of them both, with all their disagreements, in the full circle of human completeness.

Somebody complained of Whistler that in his “Symphony in White” he had included a blue vase. The artist replied by asking if a “Symphony in F” is all in F. That is just what I mean. Life is best when lived on the symphonic, the orchestral principle, with many varying notes and instruments making a perfect harmony of delightful sound.

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V

THIS is disregarded by the wives who lament the masculine habits of their husbands, and try through weary years to convert them into women. The husbands, poor creatures, cannot help being men. It is their own infirmity. They cannot have the manners or the tastes of women,—not to any great extent. They pretend that they have, during the deceitful season of betrothal—some

of them even make an honest attempt at it; but most of those who really amount to anything fail.

Men were originally made to live in the woods, where there are no doors, no door-mats, no bureau drawers and no bric-à-brac. Women are different. When the angel said to Abraham, "Where is Sarah thy wife?" Abraham answered, "Behold, in the tent." Of course!

The difference in interests between men and women is one of the elemental facts of life. It is as inevitable as rainy days in the spring and snowy days in the winter. Even marriage does not greatly diminish it. Sensitive persons, to whom every difference is a discord, and every disagreement a personal affront, and managing persons, who are not happy unless they are able to dictate all the intimate details of the behavior of their neighbors, ought not to be married. If, however, by some oversight or indiscretion, sensitive or managing women do get married, they should diligently reform themselves before they begin to reform their husbands.

VI

I RECOGNIZE, of course, the right and the value of domestic criticism. One of the inestimable benefits of being married is that thereby men may be informed of their shortcomings with affectionate frankness. But criticism is like all other forms of punishment:

it is useful only when it is remedial. When judiciously administered it makes a bad matter worse. Sir Arthur Helps has stated the case in several excellent precepts:

1. "Do not interfere unreasonably with others."
2. "Do not let familiarity swallow up courtesy."
3. "Avoid stock subjects of disputation."

When to these virtues the wife adds a conscientious habit of discreet silence, and keeps back the impending word till she has carefully counted seventy times seven, beginning at one and going on up to four hundred and ninety, she will find that the grace of forgiveness, which is traditionally associated with that number, will not be much needed. She will have few offences to be forgiven.

A cheerful recognition of the fact of difference, then, — a perception of the inevitable masculinity of husbands, — is one of the qualities which wives should have for the sweetening of domestic life. Another such quality is an appreciation of the essential importance of the non-essential.

VII

I MEAN that, while goodness is indispensable to the joy of households, and the Ten Commandments are a rule of living without which peace is quite impossible, the standard virtues are not enough. These virtues I

take for granted, and with them the honest love which lifts a marriage out of the range of contract into the pure air of heaven. But more is needed. Not all the good wives are good to live with. I have in mind an editorial in the London "Spectator" which was written on a text supplied by "The Ladies' Home Journal." The text was an inscription on a monument in a Cumberland churchyard in memory of the merits and the demerits of Mary Bond. Mary, the stone says, was "temperate, chaste and charitable," but she was also "proud, peevish and passionate." She was "an affectionate wife and a tender mother," but she was seldom seen at home without a frown upon her face. "She was a professed enemy of flattery, and was seldom known to praise or commend; but the talents in which she principally excelled were differences of opinion and discovering flaws and imperfections." The monument adds that Thomas, her husband, confessed, and indeed lamented, that of their thirty years of wedded life, he had not enjoyed so much as two. Finally, she died in vexation of spirit, and her "worn-out" husband, lingering on for four months and two days in unaccustomed freedom and peace, which he was now too much exhausted to enjoy, died also.

The trouble with Mary was that she had all of the virtues, but none of the graces. I will admit at once that Thomas was probably hard to get

along with; but we are not discussing Thomas. Mary always tried to do her duty. But she did her duty in so sharp-angled and left-handed a manner that Thomas dreaded the sight of her. She girded her loins with strength, and strengthened her arms; she laid her hands to the spindle and the distaff; her candle went not out by night; she looked well to the ways of her household, and never ate the bread of idleness; she was the virtuous woman of the last chapter of Proverbs. But her children did not rise up and call her blessed, neither did her husband praise her.

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VIII

THE little things in married life are very large. Cheerfulness, for example, without which people cannot live together in peace, is not mentioned even in the Beatitudes; unless we accept the delightful French translation, which says débonnaire where we say "meek," meaning the courteous. Blessed are they who have good manners, even at home. Blessed are all considerate, thoughtful, obliging and agreeable people; blessed are they who have a sense of humor; for they shall inherit the earth. That is the true reading for a good wife: not the meekness of the folded hands and downcast eyes, but the meekness of a cheerful countenance and a ready wit. These are the meek souls

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who have already entered upon the inheritance of the fair earth and are rejoicing in it. When they go to heaven, where they will find themselves quite at home, their epitaph will have no reference to darning stockings ; it will be in the words of the most touching of obituary sentences : "She was so pleasant!"

It is for the wife to contribute to the gayety of the household. Even if she cannot honestly be cheerful, being hard beset with the cares of the nursery and the kitchen, she can at least have a cheerful appearance.

IX

WHEN "familiarity," as Sir Arthur Helps says, "swallows up courtesy ;" when the wife outgrows the joy of the bride in adorning herself for her husband ; when the little graces of affection begin to droop their heads like flowers neglected ; when praise gives place to blame, and sympathy is crowded out by criticism — then Mary Bond appears in her exceedingly virtuous, but exceedingly disagreeable, angularity, and Thomas Bond begins to repeat to himself the old gibe that married men do not really live longer than single men — it only seems longer.

Some women miss happiness by reason of conditions which make joy impossible ; but for most women it is both possible and natural.

Some fail because of a mistaken self-sacrifice which sets a higher value on a clean house than on a cheerful heart. No sensible husband was ever of that opinion since Eve swept the autumn leaves of Eden. Cheerfulness is as indispensable in the business of being a wife as yeast is in bread.

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THE BUSINESS OF BEING A MOTHER

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ON the morning of his second day the normal child shows a disposition to take charge of the affairs of the family. The happiness both of the parents and of the child depends upon the diligence with which this disposition is discouraged. And that means discipline: it involves some sort of punishment.

Solomon's rod no longer hangs behind the door in the well-regulated household. It has been thrown out upon the brush-heap of obsolete fashions. Solomon said, "Withhold not correction from the child. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." But that was a good while ago, and many manners have changed since then; particularly, the relation between mothers and children has changed. It is far less formal and distant than it used to be, and much more familiar and friendly. The contemporary conversation of young persons and their parents would appear undignified on the one side, and impertinent on the other, to our great-grandfathers and mothers if they could spend a day with their descendants. And somehow as this new intercourse came in, the rod went out. It was well enough in Solomon's time, though it must be confessed that his son Rehoboam, the product of this domestic discipline, turned

out bad. But, for good or ill, it is out of accord with our ways. The birch is banished from the school. Even in the prison, reward is found to be more effective than punishment. There is now growing up a generation of young people who have never been whipped. They seem to be doing very well.

II

THERE must, of course, be punishment. Even children who are naturally good need it, in order that they may be kept in that state of decent subordination which secures a quiet household. But the best punishment is that which takes the form of deprivation.

The wise mother deals with the negligent or disobedient child as Nature deals with the grown man. If the farmer disregards the laws of Nature he gets poor crops or none. Nature sends him to bed without his supper, or gives him no butter on his bread. The difference between a natural punishment and an arbitrary one is that one is immediately and evidently related to the offence, while the other is not. A natural punishment appeals at once to the instinct of justice. The child is to be taught that thoughtfulness, neatness, punctuality, courtesy and obedience are associated inevitably with appreciation and happiness, and that the instant result of disregarding these

virtues is a corresponding loss of privilege. **THE**
If the child's behavior is unsuited to the se- **HAPPY**
renity and good cheer of the family table he **FAMILY**
must be swiftly conveyed to the howlery-
growlery room, where he properly belongs.
Such deprivation meets the requirements of
just and effective discipline: it is fair and
reasonable and dignified. It can be administered
quietly, gently, with even voice and without
excitement: and it arouses no serious resent-
ment or defiance.

III

AS for reproof, which is sometimes a sub-
stitute for punishment, sometimes an
accompaniment of it, and sometimes
a punishment itself, the good mother takes
care to keep it from becoming continuous or
spasmodic.

When reproof is continuous the children
cease to heed or even to hear it. The mother's
fretful voice, scolding and scolding, is accepted
as a part of the mysterious but settled order
of existence, like the ticking of the clock or
the patter of the rain upon the roof. For mon-
otony is never impressive. A seventeenth-
century sermon, every paragraph of which is
sprinkled with italicized words, is not more
emphatic than a page of quiet type; it is only
more difficult to read. The eye soon tires of
these inky explosions. "At first," said the boy,

describing a disciplinary conference with the master, "I took it hard and cared a lot and was sorry; but after he talked and talked and said it over twenty times, it didn't matter what he said."

The wise mother resists the temptation to continuous reproof by being a little blind. She overlooks many things. She accepts with as much cheerfulness as is possible the plain fact that no child of five or ten or even fifteen years of age has arrived at the era of discretion. All children are bound to say and do that which seems mere folly to their elders. It belongs to the part, and the grave and anxious world would be worse off without it. The certainty that boys will be boys, and that girls will be girls, is taken into account with all of its accompanying discomforts by all good mothers. Normal children cannot behave as if they were aged forty-five.

On the other hand, there is an unwise and detrimental silence. There is a spasmodic manner of reproof which is almost as bad as chronic scolding.

Sometimes it appears in the form of an intermittent and unreasonable dispensation of praise and blame, so that the child knows not what to expect nor why to expect it. All the domestic weather is awry. There is snow in August, and a high temperature accompanied with great humidity in December. Rainbows

shine when there is no rain, and the wind THE
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FAMILY blows when there is not a cloud visible in the sky. That is, the mother punishes the child or humors him according to the condition of her own nerves. She neglects him or indulges him according to the measure of her own selfishness. This is the kind of mother against whom a boarding-school is a blessed protection; except that what is really needed is a boarding-school without vacations.

IV

I HAVE in mind, however, a form of spasmodic discipline which is almost as likely to spoil children, and which is more dangerous because it is more subtle and more likely to mislead even a conscientious mother. I mean the temptation which besets the mother, under the disguise of patience, to keep silent when she ought to speak, until at last patience gives way under the unnatural strain, and she speaks quite too much.

Everybody who has had experience in dealing with human nature will understand. You let the thing go on and on, saying nothing, but getting madder and madder. Vexation boils within you like steam confined. Finally there is a sudden and violent explosion. You visit upon the last small offence which bursts the seal of your endurance all the accumulated indignation of the past forty days; and to the

amazed child, it seems absurdly exaggerated and unreasonable. He does not know that you have been putting your emotions into the bank and adding the interest. He cannot understand how the matter has got to this portentous bigness. And your reproof is ineffective because it assaults his sense of justice. It seems unfair.

This is patience changed into a vice. The Psalmist says that he kept silence, yea, even from good words, though it was pain and grief to him; but while he was musing the fire kindled, and at the last he spake with his tongue. How long ago that was, and yet how accurate a description it is of the processes of our own souls: first silence, then fire blazing and then speech—and after that, sorrow, for under such circumstances words are spoken which are to be regretted.

Along this straight way, between scolding indiscriminate and silence injudicious, the good mothers lead their children safely by the discipline of companionship.

V

MOST of the domestic difficulties are overcome by the cheerful mother who enters heartily into the interests and amusements of her children. The old way, as I said, was to make the lads and lasses behave as if they were forty-five; accord-

ing to the new way, the mother behaves as if she were fifteen.

This, of course, greatly increases the difficulties of motherhood; especially in the case of stiff and dignified persons, who are severe and precise and destitute of the sense of humor, and are thereby incapable of being good mothers — unless, perhaps, in the capacity of mothers superior. Indeed, the whole profession of fatherhood and motherhood is much more exacting than it used to be. But it is in every way worth while. It is not likely that Alexander or Lora Standish ever thought of their mother as a good fellow. It is probable that the very idea that mothers could be good fellows never once entered their little Puritan minds. But there are modern boys and girls of happier fortune, who are related to their mothers in just that informal and intimate and blessed manner.

For such privileged children their mother is the heart of all the joy of life. She knows a thousand games, and is deeply interested in several others in which she does not personally play, such as baseball and football — wants to know what the score is, often sits in the sun on the benches among the spectators. She is the good angel of the domestic theatre, reads plays in manuscript, and goes to all the shows; she makes the sun shine when it rains. It is a principle with her that the children shall

believe that there is no place like their own home, no such opportunity to have fun as under their own roof with the help of their mother. The fulfilment of this purpose she accounts of more importance than any of the details of the management of her household: the washings, the ironings, the sweepings, the bakings, breakfasts, dinners and suppers—these tasks, which to some women are the chief reasons for existence, she subordinates to the nurture of her children. For her the most important room in the house is not the kitchen, nor even the parlor, but that merry chamber which is the terminus of railways, scene of building operations, public library, opera-house, gymnasium, parade-ground of infantry and cavalry and battlefield of contending armies. To be a mother is her high and splendid vocation, the most ancient and honorable and influential of all professions.

VI

THE wise mother brings the best books to her assistance, and is particular about the company which the children keep when they read as well as when they play. Every day has some space in it for reading aloud; the family gathered about the evening lamp, the day ending with the provision of material for pleasant dreams. When children come to such an age that they are ready to enter into the full possession of the

treasures of literature, the mother finds a great deal of excellent suggestion in the lists of books which are put out by the colleges to be read in preparing for the entrance examinations in English. The Harvard catalogue, for example, contains every year several pages of such titles, including the very best of the prose and poetry of our language, and comprising the books with which every cultivated person should be acquainted for the improvement of his mind and the general happiness of his life.

These various demands of recreation and of instruction call not only for maternal intelligence, in order to know what is the right thing to do, but for maternal cheerfulness, in order to do the right thing in the right way. For it is possible for the mother to defeat all her good purposes by an excess of solemnity. Everything depends on the good spirits of the mother. Her smile determines the domestic weather. Nobody can be a good mother without being cheerful. A sense of humor, a ready fund of laughter and a merry heart make a happy household.

VII

BUT how can these essential graces go along with anxiety and weariness and an aching head? Plainly, they cannot keep company together. It is therefore the

duty of the mother to see to it that her head does not ache—that is, in order to be a good mother she must be herself at her best, and to that end she must understand that a great part of the care of her children consists in the care of her own physical, intellectual and spiritual health. She must be happy if they are to be happy; and wise if they are to be wise; and good if they are to be good.

There is a species of self-sacrifice which sacrifices joy itself. The martyr goes on working even after the task has become a burden and a pain to hands and heart. Sometimes this is a necessity, but commonly it can be averted by prudent management. Anyhow, in dealing with human beings, the personal qualities are the active agents. When in the mother, or in anybody else, these qualities are weakened by weariness, there can be no good results. The tired mother makes her children nervous and fretful and disobedient. Her spirit is communicated to them like a contagious disease.

Accordingly, the wise mother so disposes her day as to provide for the refreshment of her own spirit. If necessary, she neglects some household duty in order to do it: for this is also a household duty, one of the utmost importance. In this quiet time she reads a pleasant book, or says her prayers, or plays upon an instrument of music, or takes a nap, or makes a call. After that she feels better and

behaves better, and her children perceive the difference. Thus our Lord took the disciples apart into a solitary place to rest a while. What He wished was not that they should do a certain quantity of work, but a certain quality.

What is the use of working when one is getting nothing accomplished? A woman must be fit and in condition to be a good mother, else she is but beating the wind or the children. Nobody can be a useful mother without having some sort of fun every day,—something to relax the strained nerves, and to make the sun shine in the soul. For all the domestic discipline comes back at last to the personality of the mother. Most children will be good if they have a good mother.

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THE trouble is that most fathers have so much other business. They are not only fathers, but shopkeepers, lawyers, doctors, clerks or manufacturers. They must arise early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness. Even in the act of eating they are hurried in the morning and tired at night, while the noon meal is made as nearly instantaneous as possible. In the morning either the children are not "up" or they have been brought to that position by paternal urging, such as adds little to the amenity of the day. After dinner—or before, if the youngsters are very young—the children go to bed. If there is an interval between dinner and bed there are lessons to learn.

II

WE might, perhaps, begin a list of the duties of the father with this matter of school lessons. Let the children and the father gather about the evening lamp, and let him help them with their sums, and assist them to gather up the broken pieces of their German verbs. What sight more pleasant than this domestic quest of knowledge!

But there are difficulties. One difficulty is that this is rather hard on the father. He has been kept busy all day long and is weary, and

ought to have a little fun. It is also hard on the mother. She is presumably fond of the father—having married him—and is desirous of his company. She has not seen him since he ran for the electric car in the early morning. She, too, deserves a little fun. And the children's lessons are pretty poor fun,—partly because parental pride lends itself so easily to impatience, and any dullness of our children seems a criticism upon ourselves; and partly because the schoolbooks are so different from those which we studied in our youth. Children nowadays add and divide in such queer and foolish ways. These things seriously interfere with the evening-lamp business.

Reading aloud is somewhat different. Into this enterprise the father and the mother and the children will all enter together.

Reading aloud is a means of family enjoyment which unites the household, keeps the boys and girls home in the evening, and gives the father a chance to contribute to the household something better than coal and shoes.

III

INTO every normal household there enters once a week a common day called Sunday. It may be the dullest of days, or it may answer fairly to its name and be the shiniest of them all. Of what sort it shall be depends in large measure on the father.

On Sunday morning it is the father's business to go to church, taking his wife and children with him. Long ago the family pew was a domestic chamber within four walls, furnished with chairs and a table and foot-stoves for cold feet, into which the family entered and shut the door behind them. Then the square pew became a long bench, still retaining its high back and its door. The lowering of the back, the removal of the door, the giving way of the seat that was owned to the seat that was rented, and then the making of all seats free, represent not only an architectural but a social change. It means that the constituency of the Church is counted now not in terms of family, but in terms of the individual. It is an endeavor to meet an existing situation. It takes into account the presence in the community of a number of unattached persons, without any local family tie; and it recognizes in the family itself a certain exercise of private judgment in the matter of church-going.

IV

THIS situation, however, involves some serious domestic loss. It invades the unity of the family. Private judgment is an admirable quality, and the right of it is a privilege which man has gained by such hard strife that he is not likely to give it up; but it is by no means of universal application.

For example, it is fatal to success in football. The secret of success in that particular part of the strenuous life is "team-play." The eleven men must have one heart and one soul. They must be united in one supreme purpose. This agreement is not so essential to domestic happiness. The family can get along with a good deal of individual eccentricity and be the better for it. At the same time, a common domestic consent, a household loyalty, an unreserved participation in the large interests of life, and the habit of doing things together, are plainly in the direction of the family good. Under these conditions, brothers are more likely to love their sisters, and children their parents. Out of such a home boys and girls are more likely to come into strong, wholesome and helpful manhood and womanhood.

V

THAT is the father's business. The successful father is the man who accomplishes that result. Once a week he has his great opportunity. Sunday should always be a festival of domestic solidarity. On that day, at the beginning of the hurrying week, the family should be made aware of itself. It should see its face in the mirror of social religion.

I have in mind the attitude of the students at Yale toward the college prayers. Attendance

at the daily services is a matter of obligation, but the men prefer it. They feel that it has to do not only with religion, but with the college spirit. Once every day the college sees itself. It is a pleasant sight, of which men in institutions where the prayers are voluntary get but a faint and passing glimpse. And just as the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton and Rugby, so college victories on the track, on the gridiron, the diamond and the river are won in the quiet of the college chapel.

That is what I mean. The father who is attending to his paternal business takes his children to church. As they walk along the street, as they sit together in the family pew, with the father next the aisle, and as they join in the acts and exercises and breathe the air of the place, the family spirit is maintained and strengthened. Quite apart from what is done and heard at church, the assembling there of the whole family Sunday after Sunday is of social value. It makes a difference in the children.

This was true even in a generation which took religion hard and made it doubly hard for the children. Many of the children hated it; but the discipline, even in its rigor, was good for them. They grew up stalwart, self-respecting, and for the most part God-fearing people. It ought to be even more influential in

VI

THIS friendship of religion and the graces gives the father another chance on Sunday afternoon. I will not attempt to add a chapter to the Book of Sports. That recommendation of good games for Sunday had as little success as did the subsequent prohibitions. On the one side and on the other, society has resented the imposition of details. Nevertheless, the principle that Sunday is a day which the Lord has made, and that we may be glad and rejoice in it, is now pretty generally established. Sunday afternoon, at least, is free and open for every kind of quiet pleasure. The father who is minding his business takes his children out to walk.

This he does, when they are little, to give their mother a rest. Otherwise most mothers are on duty seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day, and that is not fair,—that is working overtime.

On Sunday, in the household that has a good father, the mother has an afternoon off. She sleeps or reads, and refreshes herself in soul and body. When the children grow up to a companionable age the father takes them out for his own pleasure. He keeps acquainted with them, knows what they are thinking

about, shares their confidences and their aspirations, and prolongs his youth by looking at the world once a week through their young eyes. If there is a museum, or a gallery of pictures, at the end of the walk, so much the better; but if not, the common world is good enough. At first the children hold the father's hand. After a while they get too big for that, but they never forget it. There has been established a relationship of sympathy and understanding which is a benediction, sometimes a salvation, to both the father and the child.

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VII

I HAVE now considered the father's business hours, and what he may profitably do with them Sundays and evenings. But the truth is, that the main business of a father is not found in the answer to the question: What shall I do with my time? It is in the answer to the far more profound and important and searching question: What shall I do with myself? It is a personal matter, wherein the main thing is character.

There is, indeed, some basis for the paradox that selfish parents make unselfish children. It is, at least, true that children are sometimes spoiled by a parental unselfishness which disposes the father and mother to do all the work, leaving the sons and daughters all play. Also, one occasionally finds total ab-

stainers in young men who have seen intemperance at close quarters, in the case of their own fathers. And occasionally young women react from the frivolity of their mothers, and go to live in social settlements. But these are exceptions. Commonly it works the other way. The business of the father does not consist in setting his son a deterring example.

It means much that the father be a pleasant person to live with, able to enforce good manners without inconsistency, having a stout grip on his temper, considerate of the feelings of the family. It is highly desirable that he be able to make some allowance for the natural high spirits of youth, forgiving a good many negligences and ignorances, bringing into his admonitions a saving grace of humor, being a friend rather than a master. I would not have the children afraid of him, except when conscience makes cowards of them for their good. I remember that the Bad Husband, as he was depicted years ago in Godey's Lady's Book—or was it in Graham's Magazine?—was the man who came home and abused his tired wife because the roast was underdone. He belonged to that considerable company of disagreeable persons of whom it is said that instead of borrowing trouble they just go home and make it. That was a small detail, but a significant one. The bad father is one who has, among his other faults, a habit of getting mad at the

wrong times; for example, when the arrangements of the household hinder his personal comfort. This is a contagious malady which immediately affects the children. At such times, even in houses which are admirably swept and garnished, the seven devils are invited in to breakfast.

VIII

THIS, however, though of great importance, belongs to a plane of morals on which the entire family dwell together. It does not touch the peculiar and characteristic contribution of the father to the domestic life. The father is different from everybody else in the normal home, in that he goes out in the great world, and at night comes back from it. He lives in the midst of affairs. He has his business interests and his civic responsibility. These are matters in which very little instruction is given to children, either in the public school or the Sunday-school. The newspapers do something at it, but mainly in the editorials, which children seldom read. These solid columns of profitable print they put aside, as they do the bones when they are served with chicken on the wing. The boys go into life with the ideas of business and politics which they have derived from their fathers; and that is a state of things which sometimes makes reformers discouraged. It is the business of the

father to see that his sons, when they go out to stand beside him at the market or the polls, know what they are about, and carry with them a sense of honesty and honor which they have learned from him.

IX

IT is from the father that the family know what is going on in the wide world. One time I spent a week on shipboard with the prior of a Cistercian monastery. He told me that all the news came first to him, and that he communicated whatever he thought fit to the brethren under his care. Something like that takes place in many domestic houses at the breakfast-table, where the father reads his paper as he drinks his coffee, and gives the children a lesson in contemporary history. What does he find of interest, and what comment does he make upon it? Which side does he take in the current controversy? Or does he keep this to himself, reading in abstracted silence and stuffing the paper into his pocket, to finish the rest of it on his way to town? If the father is to be marked for his excellence in the art of fathership the time for the monitor to observe him is when he sits at the head of the domestic board. Of course, the family have a great advantage over the brethren of the cloister. They can find out for themselves. The point that I would make is that it is for

the social good to have the events of the day interpreted to the family by the comments of a wise father.

The best heritage which any father can leave his children is the legacy of an upright, gentle and useful life. A man who will not lie or steal, even though he be permitted to do so by the looseness of the laws; who does his duty, though it be a humble one; on whom his neighbors can depend; who is a good friend of his friends, and is considerate of those who have few friends; who is devoted to his wife and children, and who lives in the fear, but far more in the love, of God — this man is a good father.

THE END



